

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
CHARLOTTE HARBOR
COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Tuesday, May 24, 2011 – 5:00 p.m.
4189 James Street, Port Charlotte, FL

Members Present

James Herston, *Chairman*
Michael Haymans, *Vice Chairman*
Grace Amodeo, *Secretary*
Nathaniel Cooley
Charlotte Ventola
Garland Wilson

Members Absent

Eddie Hale

Staff Present

Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch
Commissioner Robert Skidmore
Commissioner Bob Starr
Kay Tracy, Interim Director EDO
Debrah Forester, Redevelopment Manager
Dan Quick, Public Works
Bruce Bullert, CCU
Mike Martindell, CCU
Kathy M. Knee, Recorder

I. Call to Order

Chairman Herston called the May 24, 2011 Special Meeting of the Charlotte Harbor Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Committee to order at 5:04 p.m. at 4189 James Street, Port Charlotte, FL.

II. Roll Call/Determination of Quorum

Roll call was taken; Secretary Grace Amodeo confirmed a quorum was present.

III. Additions/Deletions to Agenda – Jim Herston noted that an item would be added: Support Letter for CCU's North Shore Sewer Project. This item will be heard first on today's Agenda.

Letter of Support for CCU's North Shore Sewer Project – Debrah Forester mentioned that this North Shore project was discussed at the May meeting. CCU requested the Advisory Committee to support its grant application, which the BCC approved earlier today. Bruce Bullert from CCU was available for questions. Mike Haymans requested an overview and asked the amount of the grant application. Staff was not sure of the exact amount but would provide the information at the next meeting. ***A Motion was made by Mike Haymans, seconded by Grace Amodeo and unanimously approved to support the CCU grant application and authorize the Chair to sign the Letter of Support.*** Mike Haymans left the meeting at 5:08 p.m.

IV. Introductions – Jim Herston and the Committee members introduced themselves and thanked everyone for attending. Mr. Herston thanked Mark Hilliard for offering the use of the meeting space.

V. Charlotte Harbor CRA Overview – Debrah Forester noted that staff received requests from property owners in Whidden Park regarding the infrastructure in the area. Ms. Forester pointed out the boundaries of the Charlotte Harbor CRA and noted the invitation to today's meeting included the owners of industrial properties just outside the CRA boundary. If these property owners agreed, staff could ask the BCC to include that property in the CRA. Ms. Forester mentioned that the Charlotte Harbor CRA Redevelopment Plan is the focus of the Advisory Committee's efforts. The CRA was created in 1992 and has been putting tax increment dollars back into the neighborhood since 2005. The Harbor Walk at the foot of the bridge is a tax increment project and a main focus for the area.

The Committee has been working with property owners near Bayshore Park and this year they are looking at Whidden Park as a new target area because it is an industrial area that can be highlighted to new businesses being recruited into Charlotte County as well as existing businesses that may be expanding. Ms. Forester noted the Committee would be interested to learn what the business owners and property owners have to say about the Whidden Park neighborhood.

The audience comments included the need to improve roads and drainage in the area. The roads do not meet County standards and until they do the County will not accept them; this costs money.

VI. Infrastructure Analysis

Public Works – Dan Quick reported that Public Works staff was asked to drive through the area and get an estimate for roadway improvements and drainage, which follow:

\$250,000 - 1½ inch overlay and road base

\$ 5,000 - Road striping and the installation of stop signs and street signs

\$ 90,000 - Align and grade – re-grade swales and remove/repair pipe failures

The elevation of roads was questioned and although Mr. Quick did not know the existing elevation he noted that a total upgrade to improve elevation would be difficult because structures are already in place.

A member of the audience mentioned that signs were installed a few years ago but were ruined and never replaced. An audience member stated that the scrap business located in Whidden Park is not good for the area and listed numerous complaints. Mr. Quick advised he would follow up with Code Enforcement. The owner of the property and scrap metal business stated that the EPA and Code Enforcement have visited the site and none of these complaints have been cited.

Mr. Quick noted that the above estimates may not be enough to bring everything up to County standards and advised the property owners that an engineer would need to be hired to do a field survey to determine elevations and design options. Permitting is not needed for maintenance but would be for a redesign. Heavy trucks do damage to the roads and additional asphalt might be recommended but is more costly. An analysis could cost an estimated \$50,000 but it would give the engineer an idea of what to expect.

A member of the audience asked if drainage should be addressed before new roads are constructed and/or maintained. Mr. Quick stated the swales should be wider and deeper but the existence of septic tanks, sewer lines, driveways and buildings will cause expansion issues. It was also noted that a permit would be required from Southwest Florida Water Management.

Options/Issues – Debrah Forester took a poll of the audience; most of those present are property owners. No renters. The consensus of those in attendance was the importance of improving the drainage system and bringing the structural integrity of the roads up to County standards, including signage. Discussion followed regarding CRA funding since property values are decreasing and tax increment funds are less. Ms. Forester noted that bringing new business into the area could be helpful.

Grace Amodeo asked if there were grants available to help with infrastructure improvements. Ms. Forester noted there were incentives to new businesses for road funds and brownfield incentives. Ms. Forester noted a MSBU may be an option. Mr. Quick advised if that is the wish

of the property owners, a request for a MSBU can be brought before the BCC. Once approved, assessments would be started the following year. Although MSBU funds could be used for engineering costs, etc., the County will not accept the roads until all work is done.

A member of the audience asked what the property owners are getting for their tax dollars since nothing seems to be put back into the Whidden area. Ms. Forester noted that the increment dollars could be researched but if property is below the TIF base it may not be going into the increment. Ms. Forester mentioned that Whidden Park should be included in the Redevelopment Plan when it is revised. Nate Cooley mentioned that last year the CRA offered business grants but only 2 businesses participated. Sewer grants were also available.

Utilities – Bruce Bullert and Mike Martindell from CCU talked about the sewer system. The sewer collection lines already exist for a low pressure sewer system. Drainage improvements to the area could have some conflicts with CCU existing infrastructure. 65% of the property owners are connected to the existing system. Mandatory connection is in place but not everyone is participating; those properties not yet connected are required to pay a minimum base facility charge of \$32 a month. Connection fees are based on the size and use of the building. Property owners should call for specific information. If a current septic system fails the Health Department will require the property owner to connect to CCU lines. To assist with cost of connection, loan programs are available.

- VII. **Economic Development Incentives** – Kay Tracy advised the audience that the EDO helps in the facilitation of creating business in Charlotte County, business retention and expansion, training and recruitment. Ms. Tracy noted the EDO is interested to know where there is available vacant commercial space. She explained how incentives for targeted industry can help make property more valuable. Ms. Tracy invited business owners to contact the EDO with questions and property listings.
- VIII. **Brownfield Area Designation Option** – Debrah Forester noted another opportunity that is incentive based is the Brownfield designation. A portion of Murdock Village has just received this designation and the Brownfield area in the ECAP was recently expanded. This designation does not mean the property is contaminated but if it is contaminated, funding is available for cleanup. A CRA area is eligible for this designation. Every property owner can opt in or out. Brownfields in Charlotte County are now being called Enhancement Zones.
- IX. **Additional Items** – Jim Herston asked if there was anything more important than roads and drainage. The audience agreed roads and drainage were the most important. The goal is to meet county standards and turn the roads over.
- X. **Next Steps** - Mr. Herston offered to donate his time and meet with the property owners interested in forming a committee to see what can be done. A sign up sheet was passed around the audience for those interested in sitting on this committee. The meeting will be held on Friday, June 3 at 5:30 p.m. at 4203 James Street.

Charlotte Ventola suggested the drainage be done first since it is the least expensive. Mr. Herston said he would bring the old plans to the property owners' committee meeting.

Garland suggested the property owners work through the CRA Advisory Committee, who may be able to figure out how to get money. An engineering study should be done because a permanent solution is needed.

Nate Cooley suggested the property owners form a group similar to a homeowners association and select a representative to attend the monthly CRA meetings. A common voice is needed.

XI. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting **ADJOURNED** at 6:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy M Knee

Kathy M. Knee, Recorder

/kmk

Approved: 7/11/11